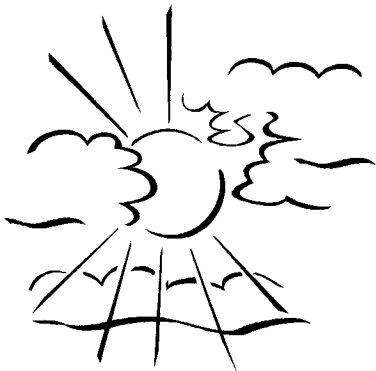


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\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Thursday, November 3, 2005**

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Michigan Report

November 2, 2005

## **UDOW TO ANNOUNCE WORK FIRST PROPOSAL**

Human Services Director Marianne Udow will seek legislative approval Thursday of changes to the state's Work First program that will allow participants more education assistance and push them toward more permanent jobs.

Ms. Udow and Labor and Economic Growth Director David Hollister said the current Work First program was not working and Ms. Udow said she planned to take recommendations for a new model for the program to a bicameral workgroup on welfare reform.

"The current design of the Work First program is one that needs fundamental rethinking," Ms. Udow said told the annual meeting of the Michigan League for Human Services. She noted that, of the graduates of that program, half return to cash assistance within a year, and most of those return within 90 days.

"So, the program we know is not working the way we would like to see it work," she said.

The workgroup is discussing revisions to state welfare laws, particularly the laws spelling out penalties for welfare recipients who do not comply with work requirements. Those laws expire at the end of the year.

The discussion of welfare reform first came up during budget negotiations, when House Republicans proposed limiting cash assistance to four years, but the provision was stripped from the final budget in favor of the discussions now ongoing.

The problem with the current system is that it requires participants to find work with no thought to the future of that work or to the role of that position in raising the family out of poverty, Ms. Udow said. "The Work First system was really designed to get people a job, any job," she said. "Our goal is really more long term than that."

"The current strategy would say we had success if we put that mom in Burger King and she stayed there 90 days," Mr. Hollister said. "We think there's a pool of moms out there who would be great technicians and nurses and health care workers."

Ms. Udow had noted that a significant percentage of cash assistance recipients are single mothers.

Some of the effort is getting people jobs and helping them stay there, Ms. Udow said. "We know if we can help our clients keep a job for a year, very few of them come back on the welfare roles," she said.

But she also said it was important that the job, or some job that could develop from it, also help to lift the family out of poverty. She noted that most of the families currently on cash assistance have at least one person working full time.

Ms. Udow also warned against trying to impose penalties against many of those who have remained on assistance for some time. "Those who've been in the system the longest have significant barriers to independence," she said. "It's not enough to say, as the House proposal said, that they're not motivated enough and we need to throw them off the roles."

Among the barriers is disability in themselves or a family member that hinders their ability to work. But those barriers also include lack of job training ranging from not having the skills needed for the jobs available in their area to not being able to read or compute sufficiently to hold any but the most menial work, Ms. Udow said.

"There is a dislocation between the unemployed and training and jobs available," Mr. Hollister said. He noted some 1,200 of the nurses in the city of Detroit, one of the state's highest areas of unemployment, come from Canada.

He said only about 15 percent of the jobs currently available are unskilled, down from 60 percent in 1950. "You must be functionally literate and you must be technologically literate," he said.

Ms. Udow also took the opportunity to slam welfare reform discussions going on at the federal level. "I thought for a moment avert Hurricane Katrina we were going to have a discussion about poverty and the problems that poverty causes," she said. "They are having a discussion about poverty in Congress, but the discussion seems to be the programs we have now aren't working so let's cut them."

# 1,800 jobs created or preserved in four counties

(Lansing, November 2, 2005, 12:40 p.m.)

Governor Jennifer Granholm announced Wednesday 1,802 jobs have been created or preserved in four Michigan counties.

Six million dollars in economic development grants from the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) have helped to convince several major companies to locate or remain in the state.

The grants will leverage \$202,060,707 in private investment to bring jobs, economic investment and major road improvements to Calhoun, Eaton, Ottawa and Wayne counties.

## **Calhoun County Improvements:**

The Michigan Department of Transportation will reconstruct the intersection of M-199 and B Drive North in Albion, consolidating two intersections, realigning B Drive North at M-199, and increasing turn lanes on M-99 in Calhoun County. These safety enhancements are necessary to accommodate large investments by Andersons Albion Ethanol LLC and Continental Carbonic Products, Inc.

Andersons Albion Ethanol LLC is constructing a new ethanol plant. The company considered sites in Nebraska, Iowa, and Indiana, but decided on the site in Albion, in part due to commitments to improve access to the location. The new facility represents \$86,000,000 in private investment and will create 33 new jobs.

Continental Carbonic Products, Inc. will create 50 new jobs at its new \$10,000,000 facility, which will be located next to the new ethanol plant.

## **Eaton County Improvements:**

The Eaton County Road Commission will resurface Canal Road in Delta Township between Northport and the Ryder Logistics facility, and add two lanes on Canal Road between Ryder and Mt. Hope Highway. Mt. Hope Highway will be reconstructed to all-weather standards and a left-turn lane will be added. Traffic signals will also be installed on Mt. Hope Highway and Canal roads.

Johnson Controls is investing \$23,000,000 to construct a new manufacturing facility that will result in the creation of 500 jobs. LDM Technologies, Inc. (Plastech) will invest \$32,000,000 in a new facility that will create 125 jobs.

Ryder Logistics is investing \$24,000,000 to modernize the former GM Delta engine plant, which will result in the creation of 440 new jobs.

The cost of the road project is \$4,499,400, including \$3,427,200 in TEDF Category A funds, \$691,400 from the Eaton County Road Commission, and \$380,800 from Delta Township.

## **Ottawa County Improvements:**

The Ottawa County Road Commission will reconstruct Roost Avenue to provide all-season access, better drainage and additional capacity at the intersection of Roost Avenue and Lakewood Boulevard in Holland Township. The work will include elevating Lakewood Boulevard to provide a safer approach to the existing CSX Transportation railroad crossing.

The project will benefit Boar's Head Provisions Company, Inc. Boar's Head will construct a new 45,000-square-foot distribution center next to its existing food processing plant. The facility was selected due to the cooperation of state and local government to meet infrastructure needs. Once the distribution center is completed, the plant will be modified to add more manufacturing space. Boar's Head is investing \$18,260,707 in the facility, which will result in 115 new jobs.

The cost of the road project is \$578,800, including \$388,950 in TEDF Category A funds, \$63,283 from Holland Charter Township, \$63,283 from the Ottawa County Drain Commission and \$63,284 from the Ottawa County Road Commission.

**Wayne County Improvements:**

The Wayne County Department of Public Services will reconstruct and resurface Glendale Avenue from Telegraph and Beech Daly roads in Redford Township. The eastern portion of Glendale Avenue, from the western edge of the Pinnacle Commerce Center to Telegraph Road, will be reconstructed. The western portion will be reconstructed or resurfaced as needed.

The Pinnacle Commerce Center has invested \$8,200,000 to redevelop a Redford Township Brownfield site that formerly housed a Ford Motor Company facility. The multi-tenant site is for warehousing and industrial uses.

is a Tier I automotive supplier that assembles and ships modules on a just-in-time basis. Digitron is an automotive supplier that assembles, packages and ships parts to automotive manufacturers and retailers. The redevelopment of this site will allow The Piston Automotive Group and Digitron Packaging, Inc. to remain in Michigan, with Piston Automotive retaining 69 jobs and Digitron retaining 450 jobs. In addition, Digitron will transfer 20 new jobs from out-of-state to Michigan.

The road project represents \$2,200,000 in TEDF Category A funds with the match coming from the Wayne County Department of Public Services.

# Wal-Mart makeover

## Katrina response kicks off retail giant's drive to mend a tattered image

Friday, October 28, 2005

BY KATHERINE REYNOLDS LEWIS  
NEWHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Wal-Mart is on the offensive, and it's about more than everyday low prices. Ever since the world's largest retailer won kudos for speedy relief during Hurricane Katrina, Wal-Mart has rolled out a series of announcements aimed at turning around its negative image. Much criticized for the damage big-box stores can do to local communities, workers and the environment, the Bentonville, Ark.-based company actually won tentative praise from the Sierra Club this week for commitments to become more energy-efficient and to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Wal-Mart also unveiled improved health benefits for its 1.6 million employees and called for an increase in the minimum wage.

But the reviews are mixed for this episode of "Extreme Makeover: Wal-Mart Edition." An embarrassing internal memo came to light this week recommending ways to curb health-care spending while minimizing damage to Wal-Mart's reputation. And a coalition of 400 groups is planning to target the company with protests during the week of Nov. 13.

"If you're the largest company in the country, you've got to be squeaky clean," said George Whalin, chief executive of Retail Management Consultants in San Marcos, Calif. "They've got a lot of work yet to do. ... They have to become better citizens all around."

That's just what Wal-Mart Chief Executive Lee Scott said in a companywide speech Monday that laid out an ambitious agenda to improve Wal-Mart worker benefits, engage with local communities, protect the environment, encourage diversity and pressure suppliers to behave ethically. The initiatives came out of more than a year of meetings of Scott and his top lieutenants with customers, employees, government officials and critics.

"People expect a lot of us, and they have a right to," Scott said. "Katrina was a key personal moment for me. I saw a company utilize its people resources and scale to make a big and positive difference in people's lives."

Wal-Mart will introduce new health-care choices to make insurance more affordable for employees and establish in-store clinics for both workers and customers. The company will work toward a goal of using only renewable energy, while eliminating waste and selling products that sustain world resources, he said.

The speech is just one step in a campaign that will include more detailed announcements over the next 12 to 18 months, Wal-Mart spokeswoman Mona Williams said. Next week, Wal-Mart is sponsoring an academic conference in Washington examining the company's effect on the U.S. economy.

The public-relations blitz is aimed at people like Shana Grassi, who was shopping at a Wal-Mart in Cedar Knolls yesterday.

"I know that a lot of the items at Wal-Mart are inexpensive, and that is why I shop there," said Grassi, a Randolph resident. "But the way Wal-Mart treats its employees does matter to me as a shopper."

**CINEMATIC MUCKRAKING**

Also targeting the more than 138 million weekly Wal-Mart shoppers is a movie called "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price," which opens Nov. 13 and attacks the company's relationship with its workers and communities.

"When the American people learn the truth, they are going to rethink shopping at Wal-Mart," said Chris Kofinis, communications director for WakeUpWalMart.com, a project of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union that is helping promote the film. In six months, 110,000 people have joined the campaign against Wal-Mart, he said.

Wal-Mart's renewed focus on image management comes amid a steady drumbeat of criticism from unions, environmentalists, state lawmakers, community planners and others. **A common complaint is the number of Wal-Mart associates whose wages and health insurance are so poor that they rely on Medicaid and food stamps.**

Susan Chambers, Wal-Mart executive vice president for benefits, discussed repairing the corporate reputation in a memo to the board of directors that was first reported by the New York Times on Wednesday.

"Wal-Mart's healthcare benefit is one of the most pressing reputation issues we face because well-funded, well-organized critics, as well as state government officials, are carefully scrutinizing Wal-Mart's offering," Chambers wrote.

"Our critics are correct in some of their observations," the memo said. "Specifically, our coverage is expensive for low-income families and Wal-Mart has a significant percentage of Associates and their children on public assistance."

The document presents strategies for discouraging people with high health-care costs from working at Wal-Mart, such as requiring physical activity in every job. The retailer employs more than 10,000 people in New Jersey.

**In Maryland and Michigan, Democratic state lawmakers want to get Wal-Mart employees off Medicaid by requiring all large employers to increase health-care spending to 8 percent of their payroll. Maryland's Republican governor vetoed the proposal. The idea has an uphill battle in Michigan, where Republicans control the legislature.**

**Still, Wal-Mart is paying attention. Company officials on Wednesday visited Michigan state Sen. Ray Basham, a Democrat who sponsored that state's legislation.**

**"They came out quite conciliatory and said they had made some mistakes and wanted to change," Basham said. Wal-Mart representatives told him Scott "wanted to make some changes in public perception."**

**In Michigan, 15 percent of Wal-Mart workers are on Medicaid, costing the state \$20 million a year, he said. Food assistance adds another \$34 million.**

Wal-Mart is just now adjusting to the reality that many employees provide the primary family income, said Paco Underhill, chief executive of EnviroSell, a New York retail consultancy. Traditionally, retail jobs have been part-time supplements.

"This is part of the process of them struggling to solve their internal problems," Underhill said.

"This is a company that is committed to becoming a trillion-dollar business, and in the pathway to it, they have to react to public opinion and public criticism."

#### **KINDER, GENTLER AND GREENER**

More is at stake than the embarrassment of lurid headlines. Wal-Mart must continue to grow -- opening new stores and entering new markets -- and needs the good will of local officials and customers. The upcoming holiday shopping season is critical to every retailer's profit.

"They are facing a reality that their image is starting to hurt business, and that's the bottom line," said Gerald Celente, director of Rhinebeck, N.Y.-based Trends Research Institute. "The public sentiment is becoming anti-corporate, and it's very easy to be anti-Wal-Mart.

"What they really need to do is build a sustained program of credibility and trust."

The Sierra Club is giving Wal-Mart the benefit of the doubt for now. The company promised to increase energy efficiency of its trucking fleet and stores, spend \$500 million on technology to reduce greenhouse gases and seek out products with limited packaging that are made in a sustainable way.

"If they are going to follow through on these things, they are real, positive, concrete steps," Sierra Club spokesman David Willett said. "If they tell a supplier they need less packaging and corn-based cellophane instead of petroleum-based cellophane, that company is going to make those products not just for Wal-Mart.

"The real impact is this chain reaction."

*Star-Ledger staff writer Beth Fitzgerald contributed to this report.*

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Published November 3, 2005

## **2 charged with defrauding state**

### **State employee, woman accused of \$38,000 scam**

By T.M. Shultz  
Lansing State Journal

A male state employee and a Lansing woman are charged with defrauding the Department of Human Services of more than \$38,000, the state attorney general's office announced Wednesday.

Spokeswoman Allison Pierce declined to comment on the case late Wednesday.

Michigan State Police arrested Department of Information Technology employee Gregory Glenn Moch, 53, of Lansing and Shontay Deniece Carter, 28, according to an attorney general news release.

Neither Moch nor Carter could be reached for comment Wednesday.

The two were arraigned before Judge Patrick Cherry in Lansing District Court on three felony counts of false pretenses, \$1,000-\$20,000. The charge carries a five-year prison term and a maximum fine of three times the value of the money involved.

The attorney general's office says that between April 2002 and December 2004, Moch and Carter claimed Moch was providing day care for Carter's children when he actually was employed at his job with the state.

During this time, the Department of Human Services, under its Child Development and Care program, paid \$38,168.54 in reimbursements to Moch and Carter, the news release said.

The program helps low-income families pay for child care while parents work or attend approved programs.

Carter and Moch were released on \$15,000 personal recognizance bonds.

Contact T.M. Shultz at 377-1061 or [tshultz@lsj.com](mailto:tshultz@lsj.com).

- Gregory Glenn Moch, 53, and Shontay Deniece Carter, 28, both of Lansing, face three felony counts of false pretenses. They face preliminary exams at 2 p.m. Nov. 10 in Lansing District Court.

*MIRS*

*November 2, 2005*

## **State Employee Charged With Defrauding DHS**

A state employee and a Lansing woman were arrested and charged with defrauding the Department of Human Services' Child Development and Care Program (DHS) of more than \$38,000.

Gregory **MOCH**, of Lansing and Shontay **CARTER**, of Lansing were arrested and arraigned on three counts of False Pretenses, \$1,000 - \$20,000, a five-year felony. Both were released on bond and will reappear in court at 2 p.m. on Nov. 10.

Moch works with the Department of Information Technology. Attorney General Mike **COX** alleges that Moch was providing day care for Carter's children when he was actually employed with the Department of Technology.

Based on the false claims, Cox alleges, DHS reimbursed Moch and Carter with \$38,168.

"Many Michigan families rely on the state's day care program to provide safe, quality child care services for parents who need a little extra help," Cox said. "By cheating that system, these individuals have deprived Michigan families and children of much-needed assistance."

Michigan Report

November 2, 2005

## **CHILDCARE FRAUD:**

Department of Information Technology employee Gregory Moch was charged Wednesday as part of a scheme to defraud the state of \$38,000 in childcare assistance.

Mr. Moch and Shontay Carter, both of Lansing, allegedly filed claims for childcare assistance claiming Mr. Moch was caring for Ms. Carter's children while he was working for DIT.

The two were arraigned Wednesday on three counts each of felony false pretenses \$1,000-\$20,000, which carries penalties of five years in prison and fines of up to three times the amount of the fraud.

Published November 3, 2005

## **Ex-Eaton guardian pleads no contest Zwick fined in 2 contempt of court charges**

By Kelly Hassett  
Lansing State Journal

CHARLOTTE - Eaton County's former court guardian pleaded no contest Wednesday to failing to account for more than \$630,000 in missing money from two elderly Lansing women's assets.

Charles M. Zwick was ordered by Ingham County Family Court Judge Richard Garcia to serve 60 days in jail, which he's already served, and to pay more than \$4,000 in court fees on the two misdemeanor contempt of court charges.

The longtime Charlotte attorney was sentenced for failing in his fiduciary duty as conservator and guardian for Wilma Southwell, who died at age 92, and her sister, Alice Grahn, who is 84 and has Alzheimer's disease.

### **Advertisement**

Wednesday's hearing addressed Zwick's contempt charges - not any criminal charge of stealing money. A separate criminal investigation by federal agents is continuing, local FBI officials said.

"As a guardian and conservator, an individual is a protector," said Frank Reynolds, special prosecutor appointed to the case.

"The public has a right to trust and rely on this institution."

A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt but is treated as such for sentencing purposes.

Dressed in a gray suit and clasping his hands behind his back, Zwick gave no explanation for where the money went and answered only yes or no to questions.

He declined comment after the hearing.

John Deming, Zwick's attorney, called the case against his client an opportunity to assess the appointment process for guardians and conservators.

"This is a sad case. It's had a profound impact on a number of people," he said.

Zwick - who handled more than 150 cases for mostly elderly people - was jailed after his Aug. 14 arrest in southwest Michigan.

He was released from Eaton County Jail last month after serving the maximum term the contempt charges allowed.

Garcia on Wednesday held Zwick accountable for violating the trust not only of his wards but the court and his fellow attorneys.

"That's something you'll have to live with for the rest of your life," he said.

Eaton County Chief Probate Judge Michael Skinner - who presided over dozens of guardian/conservator cases handled by Zwick - issued judgments against him in August after Southwell and Grahn's relatives filed complaints that Zwick failed to explain where the missing money went.

But last month Skinner disqualified himself from the probate contempt trial because he felt it would be inappropriate to sit over the case after he'd already issued judgments against Zwick.

And even though Skinner issued the judgments, relatives of Southwell and Grahn are having difficulty finding any money to collect from Zwick.

At Wednesday's hearing Deming said he doubts Zwick will be able to pay all the court fees back because his accounts are being controlled by his son, who is acting as his conservator, and Zwick doesn't have free access to them under a court order.

Meanwhile, authorities continue their criminal investigation, said Richard Licht, supervising special agent for the FBI's Lansing office.

"We're looking at potential charging options with the U.S. attorney's office," he said.

Contact Kelly Hassett at 267-1301 or [khassett@lsj.com](mailto:khassett@lsj.com).  
No contest plea

- Former court guardian Charles M. Zwick pleaded no contest Wednesday in Eaton County Circuit Court to two counts of contempt of court for failing in his fiduciary duty to account for more than \$630,000 in missing money in two elderly Lansing's women's funds.

# Food Stamp Cuts Are On Table

## House Plan Would Affect 300,000

By Jonathan Weisman Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, November 3, 2005; Page A01

House Republicans are pushing to cut tens of thousands of legal immigrants off food stamps, partially reversing President Bush's efforts to win Latino votes by restoring similar cuts made in the 1990s.

The food stamp measure is just one of several provisions in an expansive congressional budget-cutting package that critics say unfairly targets the poor and disadvantaged, especially poor children.

The battle will be joined today when the House Budget Committee is scheduled to fold eight budget-cutting bills saving \$50 billion through 2010 into a single measure and then send it to the floor for a vote next week. The Senate is also set to vote on its version of the budget-cutting package, which would not cut food stamps. The smaller measure, with \$39 billion in savings, has broad reach, affecting Medicare, Medicaid, agriculture programs, private pension plans and energy.

The Senate action will feature a showdown over a bid to open Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, as well as confrontations over limits to agriculture subsidies, Medicaid payments and Hurricane Katrina relief.

While concerns about runaway spending for the war and disaster relief have dominated the debate over the budget until now, lawmakers in both chambers have been quietly drafting changes to major spending and entitlement programs that would affect millions of Americans, including the fast-growing immigrant population.

The food stamp cuts in the House measure would knock nearly 300,000 people off nutritional assistance programs, including 70,000 legal immigrants, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. Those immigrants would lose their benefits because the House measure would require legal immigrants to live in the United States for seven years before becoming eligible to receive food stamps, rather than the current five years.

About 40,000 children would lose eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches, the CBO estimated.

The food stamp cuts, if approved, will especially affect 11 states, including Maryland, that used the changes in the food stamp law -- approved with Bush's support in 2002 -- to expand eligibility and to simplify the application process. Under the House measure, eligibility for food stamps would be tightened to exclude some recipients who qualify for nutritional support simply because they qualify for other anti-poverty programs funded by the federal welfare program, known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Richard Larson, policy research director for the Maryland Department of Human Resources, said the state took advantage of the 2002 changes in the law to simplify the lives of Maryland's poor and to reduce the onerous paperwork involved in meeting the different qualifications for various

anti-poverty programs. If a family qualifies for one program, such as Maryland's family-preservation services, it qualifies for food stamps automatically.

By eliminating such "categorical eligibility," the House measure would especially hurt those moving off of welfare, who may have incomes that exceed the basic food stamp threshold but who also have higher expenses, such as for child care and out-of-pocket health insurance, that come with work, Larson said.

White House officials have refused to disparage the House proposal, but they have made it clear that the savings from programs under the Agriculture Department can be achieved without food stamp cuts, as the Senate and the president have shown.

Such issues have created deep divisions between the conservatives pushing the cuts and Republican moderates, who fear the measure is going too far. A separate House measure would scale back federal administrative aid to state child-support enforcement programs, saving the federal government nearly \$5 billion over five years but potentially cutting child-support collections even more.

Still another House provision would roll back a court-ordered expansion of foster care support, denying foster care payments to relatives who take in children removed from their parents' homes by court order. That provision would reduce the coverage of foster care payments to about 4,000 children a month and cut \$397 million from the program through 2010, the CBO said.

"Why would we want to do anything to discourage a family member from taking in a child who has been abandoned or neglected by his birth family?" asked Rep. Heather A. Wilson (R-N.M.), who has told House leaders she cannot support the legislation.

House GOP leaders say the broad measure would root out government inefficiency and waste, while confronting the hard choices posed by the stubbornly high budget deficits and the costs of war and natural disasters. Even \$50 billion is just a 0.6 percent nick out of the \$7.8 trillion in federal entitlement spending expected over the next five years.

"We're cutting, but we're also changing things to try to make them fit today's needs better," House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) said yesterday.

But some Republicans worry that social service cuts, though relatively small, might have outsized political ramifications, especially when Republicans move in the coming weeks to cut taxes for the fifth time in as many years. Those tax cuts, totaling \$70 billion over five years, would more than offset the deficit reduction that would result from the budget cuts.

"The problem is the interrelationship between cutting taxes, which no matter what you do will be viewed as cutting taxes for the rich, and reducing programs for the poor," said moderate Rep. Michael N. Castle (R-Del.). "It's that simple."

When Bush secured the restoration of food stamps for thousands of legal immigrants in the huge 2002 farm bill, he pointed to the provision as proof that the measure was a "compassionate bill." At \$844 million over five years, the House's proposed food stamp cuts would account for less than half a percent of the total food stamp budget over that time. But Jennifer Ng'andu, a health and social policy analyst at the National Council of La Raza, highlighted the symbolism of the provision: It is the only item in the budget measure targeted at immigrants.

"Going back on this is a reversal of all the achievements Bush has made with immigrants," she said. "These are lawful residents, good enough to die for our country in Iraq but not good enough to get food stamps."

# Dial-A-Ride accepts food as fare

Thursday, November 03, 2005

By Susie Fair  
The Grand Rapids Press

BELDING -- There's one bus in town that won't be taking any passengers.

From 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Nov. 7-11, Belding's Dial-A-Ride transit service will be accepting "fares" in the form of nonperishable food as part of its "Stuff the Bus" campaign.

Over the past several years, Dial-A-Ride drives have provided food to needy families who might not otherwise have a Thanksgiving dinner.

This year, the community is reaching out to Electrolux workers who recently lost their jobs.

"Our goal is to completely fill the bus with donations for the local food bank. We thought it would be a worthwhile event because of the high unemployment in the area," said Dial-a-Ride Director Suzanne Christensen.

Donors looking to help "stuff the bus" will find it parked outside the Pere Marquette Depot at 100 Depot St. Acceptable "stuffing" includes canned goods, boxed side dishes, cereal and soup. Food collected will be turned over St. Joseph's Church at 417 S. Bridge St. in Belding which operates a food pantry.



# Nursing homes cast wary eye on Medicare drug plans

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

By Sarah Kellogg  
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Advocates for the elderly worry that the nearly 100,000 Michigan seniors living in nursing homes and assisted-living centers may have more than a few headaches with the new Medicare prescription drug plan.

Isolated from public service ads about Medicare Part D, and sometimes even from family and friends who could help them choose a plan, some residents may have a hard time getting the right drugs, let alone the best price.

"For nursing home or assisted living residents, they have some obvious barriers in making the decision," said Sarah Slocum, Michigan's long-term-care ombudsman. "They're less able to go out to community events and learn about their choices. Some of them have cognitive impairments that will make it harder to decide."

She recommends that families and residents look for plans that have a long-term-care component and offer the patient's specific medications.

The new Medicare prescription drug plans are government-approved and offered by private companies, which have negotiated discount prices on various drugs. There are 40 different drug plans in Michigan.

Seniors at all income levels can select a Medicare prescription drug plan as early as Nov. 15, and they have until May 15 to make a final decision on which to join. Retirees with comparable drug coverage through their former employers' insurance companies need not enroll in a plan. Benefits start Jan. 1.

A lot of the responsibility for helping nursing home residents through the process may fall to nursing home or assisted-living staff members, many of whom are being trained by outside groups.

"There's been some training, but I'm not sure it's enough," said Sherry Mirasola, a spokeswoman for the Michigan Health and Hospital Association, which represents the state's assisted-living centers and hospitals. "I think it's fair to say there's a lot of confusion out there for residents and staff."

Federal officials suggest that seniors in nursing homes and assisted-living centers or their families contact the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP) at 1-800-803-7174. The MMAP has a contract with the government to provide information and assistance to seniors.

Nursing home residents whose care is covered by both Medicare and Medicaid don't even need to make a decision.

"About 70 percent of the residents in our homes are covered by Medicaid and Medicare," said Patricia Anderson, vice president for reimbursement for the Health Care Association of Michigan (HCAM), a Lansing-based group that lobbies for nursing homes. "All of them will be

automatically enrolled in a plan by the state, so they shouldn't have to worry about any interruptions or problems."

But anyone who isn't Medicaid-eligible, or who is low-income and may be transferred from a hospital to a nursing home, could find themselves struggling to get into a plan that has affordable premiums, co-payments and deductibles, but also covers a patient's specific medications in a long-term-care setting.

One looming concern that promised to cause problems for nursing home residents with Alzheimer's disease and dementia was averted by the state when its Medicaid program agreed to cover the class of drugs known as benzodiazepines. Many of the drug plans do not cover those drugs, which are used to calm patients or ease anxiety disorders, so the state will foot the bill for their use by Medicaid-eligible patients.

Senior advocates fear there may be more problems like that.

"If there are serious problems, we're not going to know the problems until we get there," said Reg Gilbert, executive director of the HCAM.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON MEDICARE: Income no factor in prescription drug coverage**

*November 3, 2005*

Part of a continuing Free Press series answering readers' questions and concerns about the new Medicare Prescription Drug program. The Free Press will publish answers to reader questions Mondays through Fridays through Nov. 15, the first day to sign up for the program. Michele Poston's mother, 82, lives in Oakland County. She has no prescription coverage and pays about \$450 a month for her prescriptions. She owns her home and has some savings from a life insurance plan. Poston's mother has Medicare Part A and Medicare B and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan coverage to pay the amount her Medicare doesn't cover.

QUESTION: Are the new Medicare prescription drug plans only for low-income seniors? Are the new plans in addition to the Medicare coverage she already has?

ANSWER: The Medicare prescription drug coverage is available to all people with Medicare, regardless of income. If your mother needs financial assistance, contact the Social Security Administration ([www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or 800-772-1213). It can determine whether your mother qualifies.

Yes, these plans are separate from Medicare Part A and Part B of original Medicare. The beneficiary can choose to have this coverage and Part A and B. So, your mother could have Medicare Part A, Part B, the Blue Cross Supplemental and a Medicare prescription drug plan. The answer to today's question comes from experts on the new law at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid; the Medicare Rx Education Network in Washington, D.C., and the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP).

For more information: MMAP volunteer counselors are available at 800-803-7174 and can provide information about upcoming events where experts answer questions. To compare plans online, seniors or a helper can go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or call 800-633-4227. Submit questions to the Free Press at [askaboutmedicare@freepress.com](mailto:askaboutmedicare@freepress.com) or call 313-222-1824. To see answers to questions already published go to [www.freep.com](http://www.freep.com).

By Ruby L. Bailey

# Medicare sessions planned in Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo Gazette

Thursday, November 3, 2005

Five sessions, with the first one today, have been planned to give seniors information they need concerning the new Medicare prescription drug plan.

The informational sessions are planned by the Michigan Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program and will be held at Senior Services, 918 Jasper St. The new Medicare prescription drug plan is available to all people currently on Medicare.

Sessions are planned for:

6 to 7:30 p.m. today.

From 9:30 to 11 a.m. Nov. 12.

From 1 to 2:30 p.m. Nov. 16.

From 10 to 11:30 a.m. Dec. 1.

From 3 to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 15.

Local senior-services representatives are encouraging people to start collecting information about their drug usage and monthly premium costs, according to Colleen Simpson, coordinator of Older Adult Resources Services of the South County Community Services.

People should bring information about the prescription drug medications they take, the dosage and their current cost.

Those with low income should also know they could be eligible for extra help through the program. Low income is \$14,355 annually for an individual with an asset limit of \$11,500.

For a couple, the income cap is \$19,245 annually and assets at or under \$23,000.

Assets exclude a home, car and personal belongings; assets do include such things as annuities, stocks and bonds.

There is a \$1,500 allowance for insurance.

People can enroll in the Medicare prescription drug plan beginning Nov. 15, and running through May 15; those expecting drug coverage by Jan. 1 need to select an approved drug prescription plan by Dec. 31. The maximum monthly premium is estimated to be \$37 and the beneficiary deductible \$250 per year.

Those planning to attend any of the sessions are asked to RSVP by calling 382-0515. For eligibility information, call the Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program at (800) 803-7174.

# Local efforts to reduce drug costs are welcome

## Prescribing generics eases patients' burden

Ann Arbor News

Editorial

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

The math on prescription drugs can make you sick.

Consumers last year spent at least \$20 billion more on prescription drugs than if they'd purchased generics, according to a leading pharmacy benefit manager.

Moreover, total spending on prescription drugs in the past 15 years has soared from \$40 billion to nearly \$250 billion.

Part of that runaway spending comes thanks to advances in biotechnology that have made available capsules and tablets to lower cholesterol, control depression, alleviate hypertension and treat other maladies formerly resistant to drug therapy. Part comes from consumers responding to pharmaceutical companies' advertising campaigns. Part also can be traced to many consumers who, when given the choice, prefer brand name drugs to generic stand-ins and are willing to pay the difference.

But much of that spending also is due to many physicians prescribing brand-name drugs to their patients at the behest of pharmaceutical companies. Those companies spend millions on marketing and representatives to get doctors to prescribe their pills instead of someone else's, and often those prescriptions provide no more benefits to patients than lower cost alternatives. Some local health care providers are resisting the pressure to prescribe the pharmaceutical companies' drugs of choice, however. And the results of their efforts, though relatively recent, are encouraging.

The University of Michigan Health System three years ago targeted pharmaceutical companies wining and dining physicians. Sales reps no longer can offer doctors those freebies, which cost the companies \$2 million a year but which they expected would give them chances to pitch their companies' products. Nor can they supply samples of their brand name medications to doctors' offices in the system.

U-M and the Huron Valley Physicians Association, which includes 800 doctors at Saint Joseph Mercy Health System, also have developed other ways to encourage doctors to prescribe lower-cost generics whenever possible. Automated data bases now generate quarterly or monthly reports for doctors, analyzing how frequently they prescribe pricier brand name drugs compared with available generic alternatives.

"We say (to doctors) 'Here's the evidence and here's your prescribing practices, please explain it to us,'" says Tom Carli, director of the medical management center at the U-M Health System.

Officials with each medical group report progress: U-M's generic disbursement has grown by 50 percent. At Huron Valley, generic prescriptions have jumped to about 56 percent from about 40 percent four years ago.

Part of the groups' interest in their doctors prescribing generics instead of brand name drugs is in the savings the groups can achieve. U-M's system, for example, saved \$1 million in Medicaid reimbursement in 2003.

But their efforts also stand to save their patients millions, and with no or little-to-no cost to their health.

"We don't think we're doing (patients) a favor by getting them started on a drug that they cannot afford," Carli said.

We hope other physicians and health care providers take notice, and soon follow U-M's and Huron Valley's lead.

Michigan Report

November 2, 2005

## **PROOS: BILLS KEEP WINTER ENERGY COSTS DOWN**

Rep. John Proos (R-St. Joseph) plans to introduce two bills that would allow consumers to pay the retail price for energy-efficient home appliances without any additional taxes.

“Our goal and objective is to provide more relief for consumers during these tough economic times,” Mr. Proos said in a statement. “By cutting costs and providing efficient services to meet consumer needs, the families of Michigan’s great southwest and all of the state will benefit from lower energy bills.”

The new appliances purchased would have to meet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy’s energy star efficiency standards for the tax incentive to be available to the consumer.

“Replacing a 10-year-old refrigerator with a newer model can save up to \$350 over the life of the product,” Mr. Proos said. “I have an old refrigerator in my basement that must be 25 years old. When I replace it, that will save my family money in the long run.”

The package of legislation is HB 5402 and HB 5403.

# Soaring costs of heat must be addressed

Port Huron Times Herald

November 3, 2005

## New rules may alleviate some pain

Predictions of higher heating costs this winter pose a serious threat to Michigan and the Blue Water Area. In view of our lack of jobs and the growing demand for food and shelter, the price of heat - expected to increase by 46% - puts more members of our community at risk. Thankfully, some steps have been taken to meet this challenge. The Michigan Public Service Commission approved a six-month package of rules to help prevent heating costs from leaving state residents in the cold:

Making the due dates for gas and electric bills no sooner than 22 days after the bills were sent.

Capping the amount of utility debt consumers can be forced to pay at \$50.

If paying a monthly amount equal to 6% of their annual estimated bill, shut-offs are prohibited to seniors 65 or older and households with income levels that don't exceed \$38,700 for a family of four.

State Democrats also are attempting to address the home-heating problem. They are promoting Winter Assistance and

Relief for Michigan or WARM, a package of bills that includes:

Allowing families with incomes up to 300% of the federal poverty level to deduct home-weatherization costs.

Give MPSC the power to declare an energy emergency in which grant funds for energy efficiency, about \$5 million a year, could be used only for the immediate energy crisis.

Create an emergency energy summit to discuss long-term energy provisions.

The MPSC's measures and the Democrats' proposed legislation speak to the impending heating crisis. They merit state residents' support.

## CUT THE COST

### WHERE TO TURN

#### TIPS FOR REDUCING HEATING BILLS

Caulk and weather-strip windows and doors. \* Close chimney flues and seal unused fireplaces. \* Set the dial lower on your thermostat. Settings of 65 degrees during the day and 55 degrees at night are recommended by the U.S. Department of Energy. \* Close vents and registers in unused rooms. \* Have your heating system inspected by a professional contractor. \* Change the filters on your heating system once a month. \* Install ceiling fans to help circulate warm air throughout your home. \* Contact SEMCO early if you expect you will have problems paying your bill. A payment plan can be set up. Call (800) 624-2019.

### GETTING HELP

For details about enrolling in an energy-education class or to learn about home-weatherization programs and those that help pay utility bills, call the Economic Opportunity Committee of St. Clair County at (810) 982-8541.

To find out about SEMCO's payment-assistance and Flex Budget programs, visit [semcoenergy.com](http://semcoenergy.com). Click on SEMCO Energy Gas Co., then click on "Payment Assistance Plans" or "Flex Budget Program." The Flex Budget Program allows customers to make equal monthly payments throughout the year. Customers on this program also may see an increase in their monthly bills because of the high natural-gas prices. Information about these programs also can be obtained by calling (800) 624-2019.

Originally published November 3, 2005



Grand Rapids Press

Letters

November 3, 2005

## **Failure to protect**

I was deeply saddened and outraged to read the headlines of the Oct. 27 Grand Rapids Press when it announced that the Senate could not, and would not pass an expansion on home heating aid this year ("Heating aid defeat forces 'terrible choice,' senators say").

To think that we can spend billions of dollars to aid the community in the Gulf region, and not get the same consideration for our residents who will be in need this winter is simply inexcusable.

The frozen corpses of our elderly and those with need of this assistance should be held up to the Senate as a example of their failure to act.

I for one will gladly send copies of the articles and the obituaries to our senators to be read on the Senate floor this winter as a stark reminder of their failure to protect our community in its time of need.

CHRIS ASPLUND/Grand Rapids

Nov 3, 12:52 PM EST

## **Senate gives prosecutors more leeway in domestic violence cases**

By DAVID EGGERT  
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Prosecutors could use evidence of a defendant's past conduct in domestic violence cases under legislation that received unanimous approval Thursday in the Michigan Senate.

The Senate voted 38-0 to send the House two bills aimed at better protecting domestic violence victims who often endure a pattern of abuse.

The legislation would create an exception to long-standing court rules by letting prosecutors, under certain circumstances, present evidence that otherwise might not be admissible in domestic violence cases.

A defendant's past behavior is generally off limits during trial. But prosecutors and others have said domestic violence cases place unique barriers to successful prosecutions.

Victims may be reluctant to testify because they're scared of the abuser or think the abuse will stop. Physical evidence can be lacking. There are few witnesses.

Prosecutors say the changes in the legislation could make it easier to prosecute those who abuse their spouses.

The bills were sponsored by Republican Sens. Beverly Hammerstrom of Temperance and Shirley Johnson of Troy.

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The domestic violence bills are Senate Bills 120 and 263.

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On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

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# Judge Sets Trial Date For Mayoral Candidate's Son

## *Stephen Hendrix Also Faces Court Date On Drunken Driving Charge*

POSTED: 5:13 pm EST November 2, 2005

ANN ARBOR, Mich. -- The son of Detroit mayoral candidate Freman Hendrix will go to trial in January on a domestic violence charge.

A Washtenaw County judge set the date after the lawyer for Stephen Hendrix requested a jury trial.

Hendrix, 21, is accused of assaulting Monique Eubanks, an 18-year-old student at Eastern Michigan University, last month. His father, mother, sister and two members of his father's campaign staff were in court with him on Wednesday.

Hendrix, a student at the University of Michigan, had apparently been dating Eubanks for about eight months. The two were living together at his off-campus apartment for about three weeks before the incident occurred, according to a police report.

The police report indicates that Eubanks felt threatened by Hendrix at some point, and locked herself in a bathroom inside the apartment.

Hendrix is accused of putting his hands over Eubanks' mouth to keep her quiet.

According to the police report, "Hendrix grabbed her by the face, covering her mouth ... pushing hard (and) preventing her from making any noise or yelling for help."

Officers who responded to the scene at about 1:30 a.m. on Oct. 10 stated in the report, "Eubanks kept holding her face around her jaw and chin area, advising that her jaw and cheeks were sore from where Hendrix grabbed her."

The report also said that Eubanks fought back, scratching Hendrix in the face.

"It was noted on Hendrix that he had several small scratches/red marks on his face," the police report said.

He also faces a Nov. 17 court date on a charge of operating under the influence of liquor, which stems from an April 2 traffic stop in Ypsilanti Township. He has pleaded not guilty.

# **Father who drowned young daughter gets life in prison**

## **Mother says she has stopped hating, working on forgiving**

PUBLISHED: November 3, 2005

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

*The mother of a 3-year-old girl drowned by her father told him Wednesday she cannot forgive him yet, but has stopped hating him.*

"I truly believe that hate is a big part of what drove you to do such a horrible, horrendous thing," Nora Wells told her ex-husband in a Macomb Circuit courtroom. "I believe this because over the past year I've felt that kind of hate and it was slowly killing the rest of me. I say 'was' because I refuse to succumb to that hate, and the only way I see to do this is to begin to work on forgiving you."

Daniel Wells was ordered to spend the rest of his life in prison by Judge Donald Miller for drowning Julia in a utility sink Aug. 15, 2004, in his Warren home. Prior to his required ruling, Miller demanded two minutes of silence in the courtroom to represent the amount of time Julia spent under water that day.

"It was honoring her," Nora Wells said afterward.

A jury convicted Daniel Wells in September of first-degree murder, which carries a mandatory life sentence, rejecting the argument that he was trying to protect her from what he believed was sexual abuse. Shortly after drowning his daughter and placing her in a crib, Wells tried to kill himself by hanging but was found by Nora Wells, who arrived at the Maxwell Avenue home and cut him loose.

Also making statements in court were the girl's grandmother, Rose Abulibdeh, and Nora Wells' uncle, Alan Wais.

While Wais was faulting Daniel Wells for not living up to his promise to take care of his daughter, one of Wells' two sisters, Deborah Edwards, started talking, wouldn't stop and was escorted out of court by a Macomb County Sheriff's deputy.

Edwards admitted afterward she called Wells a "bitch" but said she did so because Nora Wells has refused to accept any responsibility for what happened; also, Edwards was protesting the fact that Wells' family

wasn't able to speak at the hearing.

"(Nora Wells) needs to take responsibility for this, too, for what she put my brother through," Edwards said. "We know Danny is guilty but so much led up to this that wasn't brought out in court."

Nora had left Daniel and moved to Westland, taking Julia with her, leaving Daniel with weekend visitations of Julia.

Nora Wells responded to that demand: "I know you and a couple of others want me to take on part of the responsibility for Julia's death, that I 'drove' you to do what you did. Well, I stand before you to tell you I won't."

She said that if spouses routinely reacted to separation and divorce like he did "there would be dead babies everywhere."

She told Daniel he failed to trust that his daughter would remain close to him.

"I think you were afraid that someone was going to come along and replace you in her life," Nora Wells said. "I wish you would have realized that never would have happened. You were her hero, her daddy, something I always encouraged."

Nora Wells said despite wanting to divorce him before the incident, she still cared about her estranged husband, "the father of our precious daughter."

Nora Wells said she is "hurt" that Wells' family suspects that she was exposing Julia to someone who was abusing the girl, saying she never would have "put Julia in harm's way" ... "no matter what my personal feelings were toward you."

Edwards and Daniel Wells' other sister, Connie Thompson, said the family believes that Julia was being sexually abused, possibly by someone or a family member of a person whom Nora Wells was living with.

Edwards said Daniel Wells' family should have been allowed to speak at the hearing because his family has suffered just as much or more than Nora Wells and her family.

"We've lost our niece, who we loved dearly, and we lost our brother,"

Edwards said. "Our father (Clinton Wells Jr.) died last August. We think he died because his heart couldn't stand it anymore."

Danny Wells showed his love and sacrifice for his daughter, albeit in a strange way, because "he wanted to die" with her and meet her in heaven, Edwards said.

Nora Wells said she was disappointed but "not surprised" that her ex-husband didn't speak at the hearing.

"He has never taken responsibility for his actions," she said, adding, "my goal is to forgive him."

She said the incident changed her life.

"I will adapt to my new life because my daughter will always be in my heart," she said.

# Teens face felony charges

Thursday, November 03, 2005

By Salina Ali

sali@citpat.com -- 768-4927

Four teens accused of damaging more than 200 tombstones last month will face felony charges. The teens -- a 13-year-old boy, two 14-year-old boys and a 12-year-old girl all from Jackson -- were identified and questioned by Jackson police detectives in October about their involvement in the destruction of tombstones and memorials at Mount Evergreen Cemetery on Oct. 2 and 18. Jackson County Prosecutor Hank Zavislak said a notice to appear with the child for a hearing before the magistrate will be sent to parents. Originally, police sought a fifth suspect because some of the destruction involved a vehicle and all of the teens are too young to drive, police said. However, they have not found any evidence to determine a fifth person was involved.

The teens were released into the custody of their parents.

Under Michigan law, damaging tombs and memorials is a felony. If the damage costs more than \$1,000 and less than \$20,000, it constitutes a felony charge with a maximum of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine or three times the total damage, whichever is greater, Zavislak said.

"Because of the statute and the way its written, it can have different penalties," Zavislak said.

"We got enough of an amount of damage to charge them with a felony. An estimate of the labor to put back the monuments was \$8,000, and that's not counting the cost of restoration yet."

Zavislak said the petitions against the teens could be amended if the total cost to replace or repair some of the headstones surpasses the \$20,000 mark.

Under the statute, if damages exceed that amount, the teens could receive a maximum of 10 years in prison.

# Caregiver sentenced in death of woman

**Georgetta Taylor will serve up to 15 years for involuntary manslaughter**

Thursday, November 3, 2005

BY AMALIE NASH  
News Staff Reporter

It's hard to even imagine what Diane Bakich went through for five days as she was hanging suspended by a seatbelt from her tipped-over wheelchair, waiting for help that didn't come, a Washtenaw County judge said Wednesday.

"How painful - it's just beyond one's comprehension," Chief Circuit Judge Archie Brown said, before sentencing Bakich's former caregiver to prison for involuntary manslaughter.

As he spoke, Bakich's sister broke into tears in her seat in the courtroom.

During those five days in July 2004, authorities said, Georgetta Taylor - the woman who was supposed to care for the 55-year-old Bakich - was on a crack cocaine binge.

On Wednesday, Taylor apologized for her neglect as she was sentenced to 2-1/2 to 15 years.

During the short but emotional hearing, Taylor in a trembling voice told Brown she thinks of Bakich every day.

Taylor, 44, who was hired to care for Bakich several weeks before the incident, later admitted to police that she left and was high on crack cocaine, so she never returned to Bakich's home and did not check on her.

When another caregiver went to the home, she found Bakich lying on the floor, semi-conscious, where she had tipped over in her wheelchair, still suspended by the seat belt. The belt caused deep pressure wounds, and four months later, Bakich died of infections and complications resulting from the wounds.

In court Wednesday, Washtenaw County Assistant Prosecutor Brenda Taylor clutched a large framed photo of a smiling Bakich that Bakich's sister gave to Taylor when she was assigned to the case. The sister, Sharon Hamilton, left the photo with Taylor as the case progressed, telling her she didn't want her sister forgotten.

"They've gone through a tragedy of a level I can't even imagine," the prosecutor said. "I will never forget Diana Bakich. Although I didn't know her, I got to know her through this case."

After the sentencing, Taylor returned the photo and hugged Hamilton.

The sister declined to speak during the sentencing but cried in her seat as Judge Brown talked of the horror for Bakich at being trapped on her side for five days.

The judge said he agreed when Georgetta Taylor pleaded guilty last month to involuntary manslaughter that he would sentence her at the low end of the state guidelines. A second charge of vulnerable adult abuse also was dismissed at the sentencing.

Brown said the case was particularly striking because it involved a vulnerable member of society who was under the care of a person who then neglected her.

At her preliminary hearing in April, Taylor testified that she decided to quit her job when she left last July 8. She admitted that she never told anyone, including Bakich, that she wouldn't be back that day - but her attorney argued that Taylor was not criminally liable if she had quit her job.

Taylor appeared more emotional in court at her sentencing as she offered an apology to Bakich's family, saying that she too has not forgotten her.

"I've also lost loved ones and I think of Diana every day. And how I neglected my job," she said, her voice trailing off.

Bakich had Friedreich's Ataxia, a slowly progressive disorder of the nervous system and muscles. Her caregivers and sister testified that she had been in a wheelchair since 1975 and could not get out of bed on her own, dress or bathe herself.

Bakich previously worked at Washtenaw Community College for 22 years and tutored students in the mathematics lab.

Amalie Nash can be reached at [anash@annarbornews.com](mailto:anash@annarbornews.com) or (734) 994-6832.



# Sex criminals disappear from local halfway house

Thursday, November 3, 2005

By Tim Younkman  
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Bay City police are searching for more than 20 men convicted of sex crimes who have failed to register their whereabouts, including two 18-year-olds from the Detroit area who last were at a halfway house in Bay City.

Lt. Dan DeWaele, of the Bay City Community Policing unit, said his officers have been looking for sex offenders who fail to register or verify their addresses.

He said most offenders, including the two from the Parmenter House, 706 Fifth St., must verify their address four times a year. If they don't report, the police try to track them down.

"We seek warrants on them because they have a window of 15 days each quarter in which to register," DeWaele said. If they fail to report their addresses, the offenders face arrest on a felony charge, he said.

The two men from the Parmenter House, Eric W. Smirnes and Joshua M. Robertson, were convicted as juveniles of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Police said Frank Hoese, director of the Parmenter House, indicated that neither Smirnes nor Robertson can be located.

Hoese declined to comment to The Times about any aspect of the halfway house, other than to say it houses 12 residents.

The Parmenter House is under the supervision of Michigan Department of Human Services.

Maureen Sorbet, a representative of the state agency, refused comment on the unaccounted for residents, citing "confidentiality" concerns.

Bay City Deputy Police Chief Christopher Rupp said that if the center had released the offenders to another institution in the state, the police would have been informed of it, so the two offenders may be at large - probably in the Bay City area, he said.

"That's been a real concern, that when these offenders are released, they stay here rather than go back to their home communities," Rupp said.

Smirnes was convicted in Macomb County of one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, while Robertson was convicted of two counts of the same charge in Oakland County, police records show.

Rupp acknowledged the police have known that the Parmenter House receives residents convicted of sex crimes in the Detroit area.

Rupp said he thought it was common knowledge that the sex offenders live there.

Rupp said youthful sex offenders also are housed in the Lutheran Children's Home, 304 N. Tuscola St.

Bay County Prosecutor Joseph K. Sheeran said his office has been aware that sex offenders are living at the Parmenter House.

He said he will secure warrants against any of the offenders who fail to report their addresses.

Sheeran said he is not aware of the status of the two offenders who had been living at the Parmenter House, but knows that police are looking for the pair.

Of the more than 20 offenders locally who failed to register addresses, one recently was arrested on the felony count of not verifying his address, and faces four years in prison.

Jeffrey J. Lorenz, who was convicted of a sex crime in Iosco County in 1996 and served 30 months in prison, was discovered living in Hampton Township and not at his registered address on Fitzhugh Street.

Michigan State Police and Bay County Sheriff's deputies also investigate offenders who fail to register, but the majority of the offenders have had city addresses.

- Tim Younkman covers area police agencies for The Times. He can be contacted at 894-9652, or e-mail at [tyounkman@bc-times.com](mailto:tyounkman@bc-times.com).

November 3, 2005

## **Santa's Sisters assist families**

By ERICA KOLASKI  
Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - A small group of women have banded together to help out local families in need this holiday season.

So Randa Grubinski, Kim Duch, Susan Dey and Shanda Legato formed "Santa's Sisters," a nonprofit organization that works to make Christmas a little easier for local families in need.

The group takes in as many needy families as it can and purchases toys and other items in hopes of helping the family through the holiday season.

"Last year, all of the money came out of our own pockets," said Legato. "We were only able to help out four families - it was all that we could afford - but we wanted to do so much more."

Legato said that this year, the group gained nonprofit status, so it is able to conduct fund-raisers such as a bake sale scheduled for Nov. 13 at Glen's Market in Cheboygan.

"We hope to get the public to help is out as much as possible this year," said Legato.

She explained that families are chosen based on need.

"What usually happens is we have a friend or a neighbor who knows someone who needs help during the holidays. They send us a letter telling us about the particular families' need and we decide if we can help them," she said. "We carefully pick and choose which families we can help. Sometimes, people are just asking for freebies and we want to avoid that."

Legato said that when a particular family is chosen, the group will go out and shop for the family in hopes of making their holiday a little easier.

"If we buy toys for the kids, we'll wrap them," she said. "We don't contact the families directly, there's no reason for us to know them. We contact the person who wrote the letter and otherwise just refer to the family on a first-name basis."

Legato said that the group is working on sending letters to area families asking if they would like to donate to the cause or if they know of anyone who could use some help.

"We know that a lot of people aren't ready to think about the holidays just yet, but we need to get the word out there," she said.

"Cheboygan is such a small community - we wanted to help the people that we live with and who we see everyday," said Legato. "Charity begins at home."

To donate to Santa's Sisters, or for more information, write to them at 4635 Richardson Road, Cheboygan MI, 49721.

# MCC drag show will benefit Toys for Tots

Thursday, November 03, 2005

By Federico Martinez

MUSKEGON CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Imagine Cher in an evening gown ... well, not quite.

Female impersonators from across Michigan will vie for the crown at the first Miss Gay Community College Pageant 7-9 p.m. Friday in Muskegon Community College's Student Union. The event, sponsored by MCC's Gay-Straight Alliance, is a fund-raiser for Toys for Tots. Admission to the event is \$5 without a toy, or \$3 with a toy. Tickets can be purchased at the event or in advance at MCC's Overbrook Theater box office. The Toys for Tots campaign collects toys for children and teens that are distributed through the Salvation Army, churches and community organizations.

Drag queen contestants -- who are students from various community colleges -- will compete by performing a slow number, a fast number and a final number in an evening gown, said Margo Higgins, president of the Gay-Straight Alliance.

Professional drag queens will serve as judges. A crown will be awarded to the winner, Higgins said.

The scheduled event hasn't prompted the same outcry that greeted the first drag show held on campus nearly two years ago. That event, also sponsored by the Gay-Straight Alliance, was initially condemned by then President Frank Marczak, who attempted to ban the show from campus.

He changed his mind after the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to sue the college on the student group's behalf. The student group donated some of the proceeds from the drag show and a subsequent show to the college's efforts to build a new library and technology center.

# Poverty plays out in 'game'

Thursday, November 03, 2005

By Ron Cammel  
The Grand Rapids Press

GREENVILLE -- You start off as a single parent with a low-paying job. With the roll of dice, you find out you need to fix the car for \$500. Roll again and good luck comes with a tax refund check arriving early. But the heating bill eats it up. Then you find a hot meal at a church.

A poverty simulation "game" -- part of an event in February -- will have participants moving among 15 to 20 stations, outside in the winter, experiencing a month in the life of a poor person. EightCAP Inc. holds its first Walk for Warmth at 9 a.m. Feb. 25 at Turk Lake United Methodist Church, 8900 Colby Road.

The event will raise money for the organization, which provides assistance for low-income people in Montcalm, Isabella, Ionia and Gratiot counties.

But it also will be educational, EightCAP President John Van Nieuwenhuyzen said.

"You could end up in jail or you could be just fine," he said of the simulation.

"I know I'll get my car fixed, but for some, a repair bill means you're done."

Cori Anderson, a health assistant at EightCAP, said a potentially cold, wintry day may help participants understand the urgency of assistance.

Some scenarios will have participants going inside the warm church for their next roll of the dice; others may be led only outside.

EightCAP is promoting the event with 2,000 brochures, visits to area events and mailings. The hope is to draw at least 100 people from outside the agency and conduct the program annually. Each participant is asked to raise at least \$35 in pledges.

A free pancake breakfast at 8 a.m. also will raise money as eaters, for a fee, "vote" for the best of three cooks.

Van Nieuwenhuyzen said funding for services such as EightCAP is expected to drop because of hurricane relief and federal tax cuts.

"The job to help the less fortunate falls on local efforts, even from family to family and on faith-based organizations," he said. This is on top of high unemployment and increasing heating bills. EightCAP has several community and housing services, and runs Head Start, employment services and a charter school.

Funds raised by efforts such as Walk for Warmth may be matched by the Michigan Public Service Commission, Van Nieuwenhuyzen said.

For more information, call 754-9315.

# **Our View: Program getting more fanfare than it deserves**

Midland Daily News

11/02/2005

When something sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Last week we had an editorial in the Daily News that talked about a new pilot program being initiated by the Department of Human Services that would focus on cutting welfare costs across the state.

This program would arrange for 22 "additional" staff to help with training and essentially become cost-cutting measures for "several" counties.

We did some additional digging after running the editorial, and found out that the additional staff would not be new hires.

Instead, according to an official with the DHS, the 22 staff members would be picked from adjacent counties.

And the several counties that would be involved with the pilot? Legislation only required that four to six counties be chosen.

Kent and Oakland counties will be among those selected, and maybe Wayne County. A rural site will be selected, but the criteria for how to select that county has not yet been determined.

Although we still agree that a program that focuses on getting people off of welfare is a good thing, we don't like the idea of swiping staffers from other counties, leaving those with a shortage, nor are we thrilled by the fact that such a small number of counties will benefit.

A retired DHS official who chose to stay anonymous told us that there is already a staffing shortage at the DHS, with 25 percent fewer staff than five years ago. If counties are already in a bind, why make them fall deeper?

Five years ago Project Zero was a successful statewide program that reduced welfare caseloads, but financial constraints caused it to become extinct.

If a successful program can be abandoned simply because the money is not there to run it, why put energy into another one that touts the same purpose but hurts other counties?

There are budgetary issues and staffing issues, so let's not kid ourselves by touting a new pilot program and giving it more fanfare than it deserves.

# TWO FACES OF MICHIGAN'S ECONOMIC FUTURE:

## Boom or bust? A lot depends on workers

### Ability to adapt will tell which way state goes

*November 3, 2005*

BY JOHN GALLAGHER  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Here's one snapshot of Michigan's economy:

Lyle Wolberg and his partners founded Southfield-based Telemus Capital Partners in February with eight employees. Just nine months later, they're up to 22 staffers, and the money-management firm oversees \$1.2 billion in mostly private family wealth from southeast Michigan. When he finds time, Wolberg, 36, likes to vacation in the Florida Keys with his wife and three children.

Now, here's another snapshot:

Harris Brown used to be an overtime king among mechanics at Northwest Airlines. He earned \$130,000 last year. He has a cabin Up North, but was too busy to use it.

"I came to Detroit for the money," Brown, who turns 46 on Saturday, said last week. But with his job gone because of the mechanics strike against Northwest, he plans to leave the state forever. Both these snapshots capture faces of Michigan's economy -- the prosperity of new financial and service professionals, the bitterness of the disappearing blue-collar jobs. Both portraits are real. But which is more real? Which is more representative of Michigan's current and future economy?

The troubling truth is that Michigan could go either way. It could find new industries and new applications for old ones, and swell the wealth created in a century of industrialization. Or it could watch its economy erode, its jobs disappear, its people move away.

Put another way, Michigan could be a state of either upscale malls or shuttered factories. Right now, Michigan has both. But it could tip more one way or the other. And with its bedrock automotive industry going through unprecedented turmoil, the signs are worrisome.

"I don't see much alternative than to get through this restructuring now," Rebecca Blank, dean of the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, said of the current wave of automotive troubles. "The real question is, does it lead to something better or does Michigan become a smaller and a poorer state? I think the jury is still out on that one."

To be sure, Michigan remains a vital part of the national economy. Michigan's gross domestic state product, its total output of goods and services, ranked 9th among the 50 states in 2004 -- the same ranking it held in 1990. If Michigan were a separate country, its economy would have ranked 17th in the world in 2004, bigger than Switzerland's, smaller than the Netherlands', according to World Bank data.

Moreover, even with factories shuttering all across the state, Michigan remains a powerhouse producer of goods. In 2003, the most recent year for which data were available, Michigan ranked

4th among the states in the dollar value of its manufacturing output. It held that same ranking in 1990.

If Michigan remains a major economy, what's the problem? The threat is that its economy, while large and brawny, has been losing ground to fleetier state economies for years.

The inflation-adjusted dollar value of Michigan's total output grew by 9% from 1997 to 2004.

But the value of the U.S. output as a whole grew by 24%. Florida's output grew by 31%, California's by 38%, and Arizona's by 47%. Like its namesake university, Michigan is grinding out a ground game while other states pass for touchdowns.

Charles Ballard, a professor of economics at Michigan State University, said that in the 20th Century, Michigan once rode the manufacturing wave more successfully than just about anywhere else in the world.

"I don't think we even noticed that we were riding on a wave that wasn't moving so fast anymore until the auto industry has its big problems about 25 years ago," he said.

Moreover, the latest round of restructuring, in which parts-maker Delphi Corp. has filed for bankruptcy and the UAW has tentatively agreed to pay more for health benefits at General Motors Corp., is eating away at a longtime Michigan entitlement: a middle-class lifestyle for blue-collar workers.

"I don't want to say that no higher-educated workers are being affected by this restructuring, but it's disproportionately affecting earnings and wages and employment among less skilled," Blank said.

"Michigan is in a serious position now," said Lansing-based economist Patrick Anderson. "If we scramble, we can keep a good share of our auto manufacturing jobs. If we fail to do that, we're going to lose a lot of them."

But even now, Ballard said, many Michiganders remain in denial. Michigan ranks 39th among the 50 states for residents with bachelor's degrees or higher, according to U.S. Census data. That sandwiches the state between Tennessee and Alabama. Nor are other Midwest manufacturing states all such low achievers on the educational scale. Illinois ranks a healthy 15th and Ohio 25th.

Michigan's industrial power "created a set of attitudes that hundreds of thousands of Michigan people have a sense that, 'I don't need college, I'm going to get one of those factory jobs,' "

Ballard said. "And that is a dream that is shrinking, shrinking, shrinking. One of the biggest challenges facing the Michigan economy is we're sort of behind the curve in the attitude toward the skills levels that we'll have to have."

### **Growing and shrinking wealth**

The enormous wealth of Michigan, built up over generations of automotive profits, underscores the success of new-economy professionals like Wolberg. The money manager studied business at U-M, then became a financial planner, eventually working with the investment firm UBS. He and a few colleagues formed their own firm, Telemus, this year.

"There's a huge concentration of family wealth" in southeast Michigan, Wolberg said. "Most of the wealth here isn't from the attorneys and professionals, it's from people who started their own business and created wealth." His firm's typical client has a minimum of \$1 million invested with Telemus.

If anything, the restructuring of Michigan's economy has helped Telemus. A lot of first- or second-generation wealth is what Wolberg calls "money in motion," with family businesses being sold or cashed out and inheritances passed along.



"That created quite a bit of opportunity for financial services firms," Wolberg said. "In this kind of confusion, with all the noise, CNBC, the Internet, people are just confused."

But if Wolberg represents an upside of Michigan's large, if troubled, economy, Brown represents its blue-collar woes. An aircraft mechanic since 1981, Brown joined Northwest Airlines in 1989, moving to Detroit from Atlanta not because he liked the city -- he admits he hates living here -- but because the money was just too good. The same reasoning brought generations of industrial workers to the city.

"In 10 years, I did nothing but work," Brown said from his home in Wyandotte last week. "Just making money. My whole life basically was going to work." It was not unusual for him to work until 2:30 a.m. at Metro Airport, then return to the airport at 7:30 a.m. to pull another 12-hour shift.

"I consider myself very fortunate because I was one of these people who love going to work. If I was sick, I was always scared I was missing something," Brown said. "I actually had a cabin up at Higgins Lake, but I never went there. I was too busy working."

But with his job at Northwest likely gone as a result of the mechanics strike and airline cutbacks, Brown says he may just move someplace warmer. In the future, he expects to make no more than about a third of what he made during his best years with the airline. He has a commercial driver's license and is considering driving trucks for a while.

### **Fixing auto industry comes first**

Assessing Michigan's robust past and uncertain future, economists and policy-makers offer all manner of prescriptions. Anderson insists the state needs to scrap its Single Business Tax, a levy on businesses that he says makes the state uncompetitive. Ballard is no fan of the SBT, but he wants to see the revenue replaced and spent on education.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has her "cool cities" initiative to try to draw younger workers back to Michigan. She also is pushing her plan for a billion-dollar bond issue to fund new economic development in the state.

Whatever happens, Michigan is likely to retain its important place in the world economic order for years to come. But no one knows if the state's economy will strengthen or weaken relative to everyone else's. And for the moment, the long-term challenges must take a backseat to getting through the automotive problems.

"You've got auto companies over the next six months that are looking at 10 or 15 or 40 or 50 plants and need to close 10," Anderson said. "Where are the 10 going to be closed? Michigan? Alabama? Ohio? We've got to hustle to protect as many of those as we can."

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# Economist sees state lag in changing times

*November 3, 2005*

BY ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

The Michigan economy appears to be in dire straits.

With major automakers and suppliers looking to cut costs and benefits for employees, threatening to put thousands out of work, the long-term future for Michigan's workforce looks uncertain.

Dana Johnson, chief economist for Comerica Bank, spoke to the Free Press about the Michigan economy and the future.

QUESTION: What is your overall assessment of the Michigan economy?

ANSWER: It has been and likely will continue to lag the national economy. The most recent data we have is for 2004, which tells us that last year was the seventh straight year that the Michigan economy grew slower than the national economy. In all likelihood we will be behind again this year.

Q: Is the Michigan economy in danger of a recession?

A: Well, it feels like a recession whether or not you call it a recession because jobs aren't growing. The economy, by the national figures, did grow by 1.5% in 2004, so technically it wasn't, but it sure felt like it.

Q: What is the current state of the automotive industry and how does Michigan differ from the rest of the country?

A: The national auto industry has actually been growing and is very healthy.

Production and sales have stayed high, but a larger portion of autos sold are being made in other parts of the country.

There is a booming auto sector in the South and Southwest in terms of production and sales. The auto sector here in Michigan is contracting and we're headed for a period of major adjustments in terms of capacity, salaries and benefits, and employment. But overall, the auto industry outside of Michigan is doing pretty well.

Q: What do you say to manufacturing workers in Michigan who are seeing jobs being cut and benefits slashed, while your outlook appears to be fairly rosy?

A: I don't think the outlook is rosy, but it is steady. There is inevitable change in the makeup of the national economy that has been under way for literally 50 years.

It is the case that it's harder and harder for somebody to get a job that will generate a middle-class lifestyle by working in the manufacturing sector.

I don't want to minimize the idea that there are going to be some necessary adjustments for people working in the manufacturing sector. But those people are going to have an awful lot of trouble maintaining their lifestyles unless they can develop new skills.

Q: What are the most pressing issues for Michigan consumers and the economy?

A: In the short run, this winter, people are going to be faced with painfully high energy bills.

Looking more generally, our economy is in constant transition.

As technology changes, workers are going to have to be adjustable, adaptable and willing to go through new learning to share in the prosperity of our economy. That's just going to be a never-

ending feature of our economy here in Michigan. The idea of lifetime employment for one company is a thing of the past.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: The economy has to deal with a variety of contractual shocks, but we typically get through those. What I have learned to be true is that the U.S. economy is remarkably resilient and can take an awful lot before you tip it into recession.

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